

REMARKS

Summary of the Office Action

Claims 1-26 are considered in the Office action.

Claims 1-2, 5 and 12-13 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as obvious over Smith U.S. Patent No. 6,441,920 ("Smith") in view of Barry et al. PCT Patent Publication WO 97/06481 ("Barry").

Claims 3-4, 6-8, 14-15, 17-19 and 23-24 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as obvious over Smith in view of Barry and Tan et al. U.S. Patent No. 5,978,560 ("Tan").

Claims 9-10 and 20-21 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as obvious over Smith in view of Barry, Tan, Lobiondo U.S. Patent No. 5,287,194 ("Lobiondo") and Freedman U.S. Patent No. 4,839,829 ("Freedman").

Claims 11 and 22 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as obvious over Smith in view of Barry, Tan, Lobiondo, Freedman and Takeda U.S. Patent No. 6,229,622 ("Takeda").

Claims 25 and 26 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as obvious over Tan in view of Lobiondo.

Summary Of Applicant's Response

Applicants have cancelled claims 2-26 without prejudice, and have amended claim 1 to overcome the Examiner's rejections and more particularly point out and distinctly claim the invention.

Reply to Rejections Under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a)

Claims 1-2, 5 and 12-13 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as obvious over Smith in view of Barry.

Claims 3-4, 6-8, 14-15, 17-19 and 23-24 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as obvious over Smith in view of Barry and Tan.

Claims 9-10 and 20-21 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as obvious over Smith in view of Barry, Tan, Lobiondo and Freedman.

Claims 11 and 22 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as obvious over Smith in view of Barry, Tan, Lobiondo, Freedman and Takeda.

Claims 25 and 26 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as obvious over Tan in view of Lobiondo.

Amended claim 1 recites a raster image processing (RIP) software application adapted for use on a networked computer coupled to a plurality of networked printers, the software application adapted to receive a print job, parse the print job into one or more print pieces, load balance the print pieces among the printers based on color use and print speed, and provide a list of all of the printers that received the print pieces. None of the cited references describe or suggest such a method.

Instead, Smith describes a prepress system 32 that includes one or more front end computers 40 coupled via computer network 35 to image servers 42 and one or more raster image processors ("RIPs") 34. (Col. 5, lines 21-23; Col. 5, lines 57-58; Col. 6, lines 10-14). Image server 42 receives and stores images from front end computer 40, and may queue print jobs for immediate transmission to an available RIP 34, or may store images for later processing by RIP 34. (Col. 5, lines 58-61). Image server 42 allows front end users to output jobs even if RIPs 34 are busy, and also keeps RIPs 34 continuously busy by queuing jobs for RIPs 34. (Col. 5, lines 61-65). RIPs 34 receive PDL files from front end computers 40 and image server 42 via network 35. (Col. 6, lines 10-12). RIPs 34 provide raster data to output manager 41, which either stores the raster data or immediately send the data to an output device 46. (Col. 6, lines 28-31).

Unlike the claimed invention, Smith does not describe or suggest a software application adapted to receive a print job, parse the print job into one or more print pieces, load balance the print pieces among a plurality of networked printers based on color use and print speed, and provide a list of the printers that received the print pieces. Indeed, as the Office action concedes, Smith does not describe or suggest anything regarding parsing a print job into one or more pieces. Instead, Smith describes print systems in which entire print jobs are sent to only one of output devices 46. (Col. 6, lines 28-31; Col. 8, lines 59-62). Smith does not describe or suggest load balancing portions of a print job between multiple printers, and further does not describe or suggest providing a list of the printers that received the print pieces.

Barry also does not describe or suggest the claimed invention. Instead, Barry describes a multiple print engine configuration that allows a plurality of workstations 10 to create individual print jobs and then transfer them to a distributing processor 14. (Abstract). Distributing processor 14 is operable to spool the jobs to print spooler 20 and then perform a software RIP on the print jobs. (Id.). The RIP process divides the jobs into multiple individual jobs which are stored in page buffer 24. (Id.). An image task manager 26 and an engine manager 28 are then operable to selectively distribute the pages to multiple print engines 16. (Id.).

Unlike the claimed invention, Barry does not describe or suggest a software application adapted to receive a print job, parse the print job into one or more print pieces, load balance the print pieces among a plurality of networked printers based on color use and print speed, and provide a list of the printers that received the print pieces. Barry describes distributing one or more print jobs between print engines based on the number of pages per job and copies of each job. (Page 7, lines 18-31; page 12, line 23 through page 15, line 13). Barry nowhere describes or suggests distributing a print job between printers based on any other attribute, and never describes or suggest anything regarding providing provide a list of the printers that received the print pieces.

Further, neither Smith nor Barry include any suggestion to combine the two unrelated references. Moreover, it is unclear how these two references could possibly be combined. Smith describes print systems in which entire print jobs are sent to only one of output devices 46. Barry describes distributing one or more print jobs between print engines based on the number of pages per job and copies of each job. These two references therefore appear to be mutually exclusive, and strongly militate against any possible combination. Because neither Smith nor Barry, alone or combined, do not describe or suggest the claimed invention, applicant respectfully requests that the Examiner withdraw the § 103(a) rejection of claim 1.

Applicants have cancelled claims 2-26 without prejudice. Accordingly, applicants respectfully submit that the § 103(a) rejections of claims 2-26 are moot.

Conclusion

For the reasons stated above, applicants submit that this application, including amended claim 1, is allowable. Applicants therefore respectfully request that the Examiner allow this application.

Respectfully submitted,



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